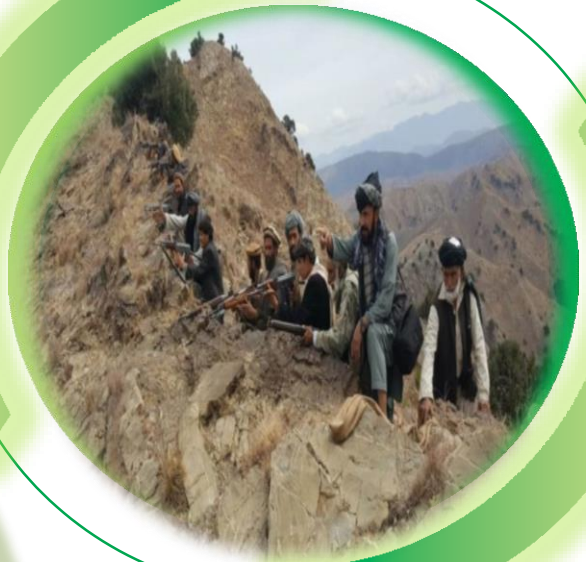


KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA TRIBAL DISTRICTS ANNUAL SECURITY REPORT 2020



**Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal
Districts**

ANNUAL SECURITY REPORT 2020

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Map of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts

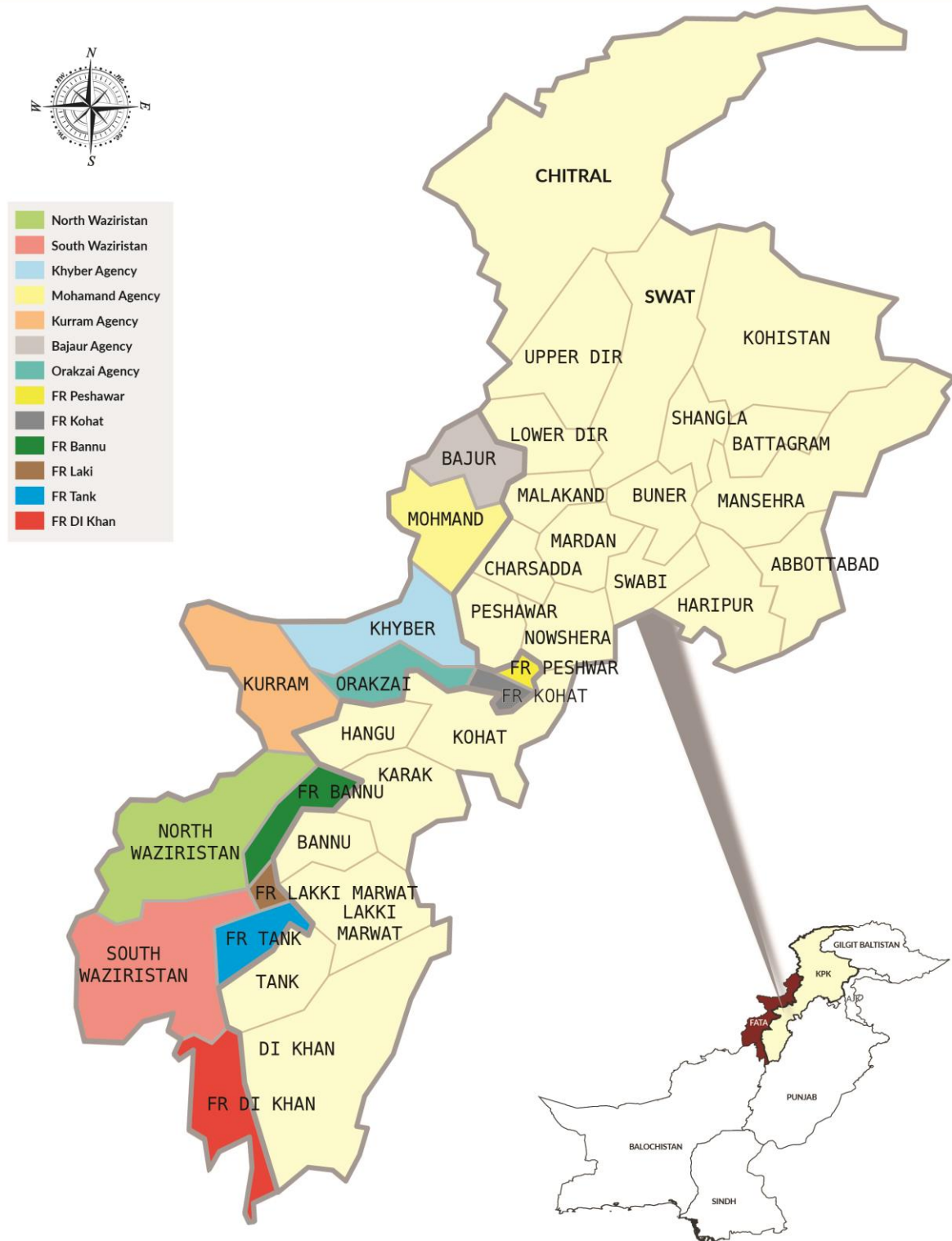


Table of Content

Map of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts	I
About FATA Research Centre.....	III
Annual Security Report 2020.....	III
Methodology.....	III
Acronyms.....	IV
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Security Overview 2020.....	1
Chapter 2: District wise Comparative Analysis.....	4
Chapter 3: Trends and Analysis.....	13

About FATA Research Centre

The FATA Research Centre (FRC) is a non-partisan, non-political and non-governmental research organization based in Islamabad. It is the first ever think-tank that specifically focuses on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTDs) – previously known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. The purpose of establishing the FRC is to create a better understanding about the conflict in former FATA (presently KPTDs) among the concerned stakeholders through undertaking independent, impartial and objective research and analysis. The FRC endeavors to create awareness among all segments of the Pakistani society and the government to jointly strive for a peaceful, tolerant and progressive society in the KPTDs.

Annual Security Report Former FATA

The Annual Security Report reviews recent trends in conflict in the former FATA such as the number and type of terrorist attacks, tactics and strategies used by the terrorists and the resultant casualties. The objective of this security report is to outline and categorize all forms of violent extremism, role of terrorist groups and the scale of terrorist activities in the area. This report is the result of regular monitoring of terrorist and counter-terrorist activities by employing primary and secondary sources. FRC collects data from the field through its field researchers working in all the districts of the FATA, and also consults reliable secondary sources to ensure the quality and veracity of its research. However, it also faces certain limitations since the area under discussion is undergoing counter-insurgency operations and imposition of curfews. Hence, terrorist and counter-terrorist attacks sometimes restrict the mobility of our field staff. Thus, the number of actual occurrences of violent acts may be greater than those being reported here.

Methodology

The FRC research team collects information and data from both primary and secondary sources and presents its analysis on the security issues. FRC's internal database prepared through daily monitoring of more than a dozen English and Urdu newspapers, periodicals, magazines, monitoring and reviews of locally distributed literature in the area and data collected from district administration in KPTDs contributed to the compilation of this report. Additionally, an up-to-date archive system at the FRC is consulted for authenticity and reference to important events and incidents. FRC correspondents, based in all the seven Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tribal districts, provide information and data verification from concerned authorities and locals of the area.

Acronyms

FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FRC	FATA Research Centre
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
ISPR	Inter-Services Public Relations
TTP-JuA	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Jamaat-ul-Ahrar
NAP	National Action Plan
NW	North Waziristan
SW	South Waziristan
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
CT	Counter-Terrorism
LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi
LeJA	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Almi
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
KPTDs	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts

Glossary

Terrorist Attacks	Indiscriminate use of violence by local, non-local, and foreign terrorist outfits.
Counter-Terrorist Attacks	Large-scale military operations launched by security forces and para-military troops against terrorist in the KPTDs in order to restore law and order and to establish the writ of state.
Amn Lashkar (Urdu for Peace Militias)	Volunteer tribal militias formed by tribes, clans, and sub-clans living in the KPTDs to aid the Pakistani government and security forces in their battle against terrorists of all shades.

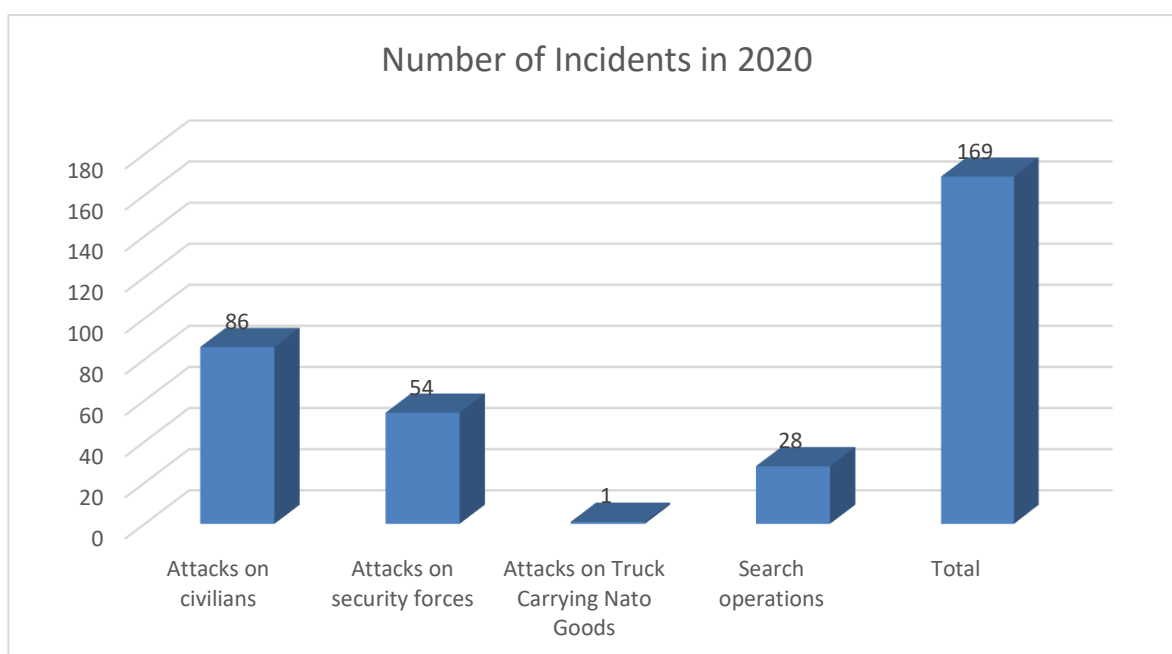
Chapter 1

Introduction

Security Overview of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTDs) 2020

The security situation continued to deteriorate in the four out of the seven districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTDs)¹ during the year 2020. An upward trend in militancy related incidents and resultant casualties was observed in Bajaur, Khyber, North Waziristan and South Waziristan districts of KPTDs in the reporting year. Overall 29 percent increase in militancy incidents and 39 percent in causality index was observed in the year 2020 as compared to the preceding year.

The following graph gives a bird's eye view of the nature of incidents in the year 2020 in all the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province:



The graph given above shows that a total of 169 violent incidents (137 militancy and 32 counter-militancy) were recorded during the year 2020 as compared to 160 such incidents (106 terrorism and 54 counter-militancy) in the year 2019.

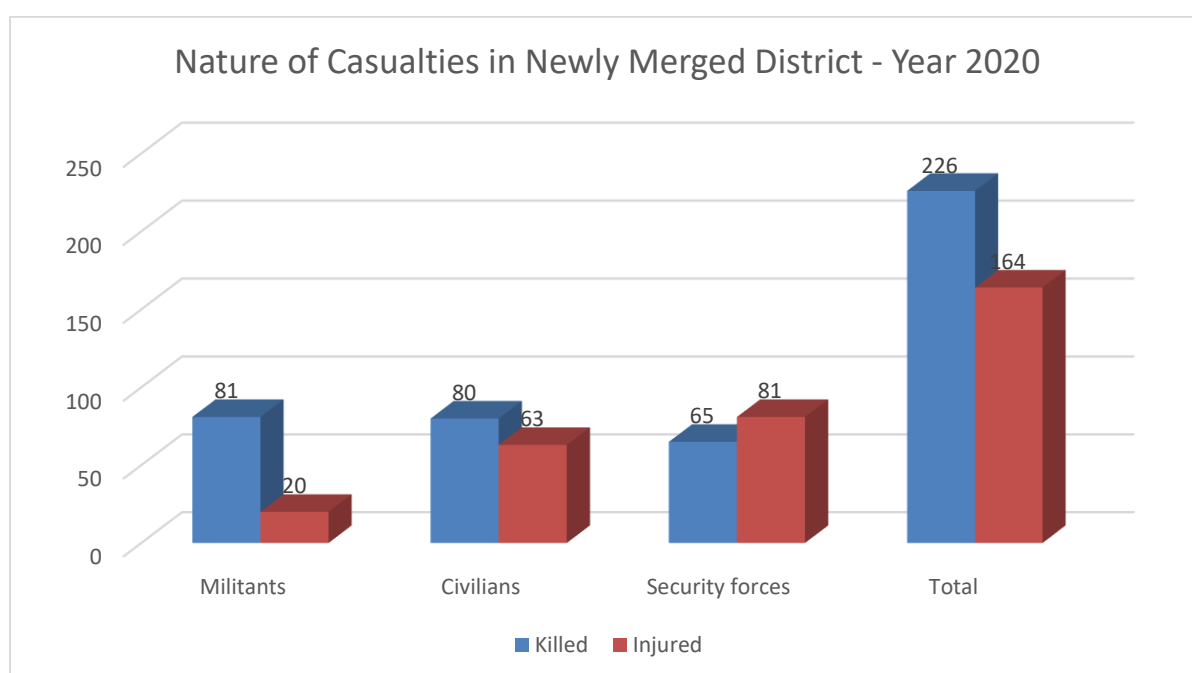
A further breakdown of terrorism incidents shows that of the total 137 militancy incidents in

¹ The KPDs was previously known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), until it was merged with the adjoining Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KP) in May 2018. Henceforth, FATA is being referred to as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTDs) or Newly Merged Districts (NMDs).

2020, 86 militancy attacks (51 percent) targeted the ordinary civilians while 54 attacks (32 percent) were directed against security forces in the area. One militancy attack on trucks carrying goods for NATO forces in Afghanistan was also reported from Khyber district.

On the other hand, to counter the rising tide of militancy incidents in the KPTDs, Pakistani security forces as a part of ongoing military operation, code named Radd-ul-Fasad conducted intelligence based operations (IBOs) across the newly merged district during the year 2020. In total 28 IBOs were recorded in the year 2020. Though IBOs were conducted in all the tribal districts of KP, the North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Khyber and Bajaur remained the prime focus of these CT operations.

The violent incidents of both terrorism and counter-terrorism, resulted in a total of 390 casualties – 226 killed and 164 injured – in all the KP Tribal districts, marking a significant increase of 39 percent in overall casualties. The following graph provides an overview of these casualties.



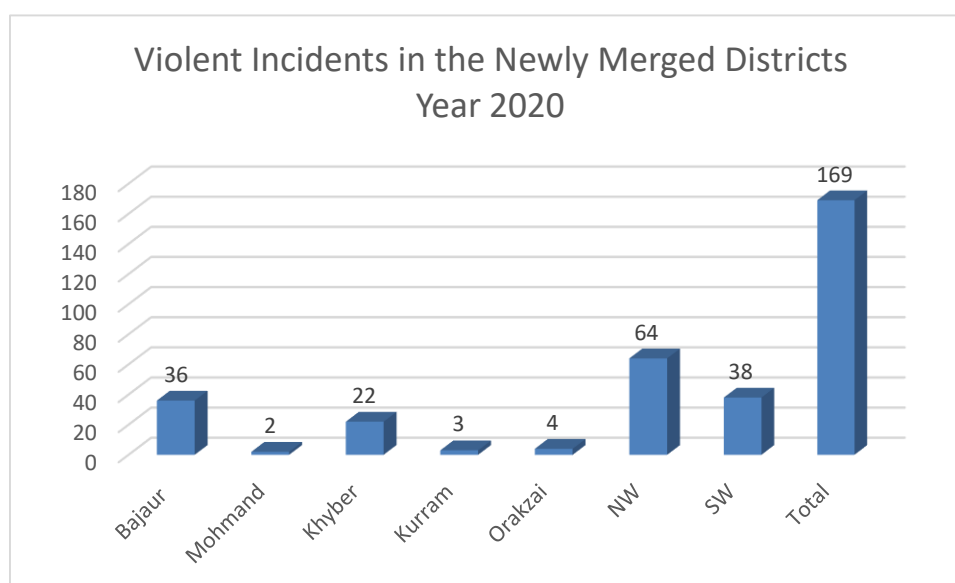
According to the graph, security forces remained the prime target of militants. Of the total casualties, 146 casualties (65 killed and 81 injured) were that of security forces which accounted for 38 percent of the overall casualties.

Civilian stood second with 143 casualties (80 Killed and 63 Injured). The growing number of target killings and IED attacks by militants, particularly in Khyber, Bajaur, North and South Waziristan districts were the main causes of the high number of civilian casualties during the

year 2020. Comparatively, 62 percent increase in civilian casualties was observed in the reporting year as compared to the year 2019.

High number of militant casualties were also reported during the outgoing year. In 28 IOBs across NMDs, 81 militants were killed, 20 were injured and 21 others were captured. Although the high number of militant casualties during IOBs in the year 2020, illustrates effectiveness of intelligence based operations; nevertheless it also shows the growing presence of Tehreek-e-Taliban in the newly merged districts. On 8 September 2020, Waseem Zakeria, the mastermind of militant attacks along with four accomplices were killed during an intelligence operation in North Waziristan tribal district.² According to ISPR, the official mouthpiece of Pakistan Army, the deceased terrorist, Waseem Zakeria, was the mastermind of 30 attacks, including targeted killing of government officials and security forces personnel.³

The district wise breakdown of terrorism incidents illustrates that North Waziristan tribal district remained the most turbulent one. The graph given below shows that 64 terrorism



incidents were recorded in the district during the reporting year compared to 45 such incidents in the previous year. The main reason for the high number of

terrorism incidents in NWD during the year 2020 were the growing incidents of target killing of civilians, IED attacks, and ambush attacks carried out by militant belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

South Waziristan tribal district stood second with 38 incidents followed by Bajaur and Khyber, which reported 36 and 22 militancy incidents respectively. Two terrorism related incidents

² Dawn, "Mastermind' of militant attacks among five killed in North Waziristan", Dawn, 08 September 2020. ['Mastermind' of militant attacks among five killed in North Waziristan - Pakistan - DAWN.COM](https://www.dawn.com/news/1504444)

³ ibid

were reported from Mohmand district, while four such incidents took place in Orakzai district during the year 2020.

Although, only three militancy related incidents were reported from Kurram district; nevertheless the security situation in the district remained volatile during the outgoing year due to the growing number of land disputes in the district. For instance, in May 2020, fierce clashes erupted between Parachamkani tribe and Balishkhel tribes in Kurram tribal district. These clashes resulted in 54 casualties (14 killings and 40 injuries). Given the sectarian nature of conflict in Kurram and Orakzai, disputes over the ownership of land can potentially lead to another wave of violent armed conflict on sectarian grounds.

Besides Kurram, land disputes also reported from all the other six districts of the newly merged districts (NMDs). According to FRC data base, 158 tribesmen lost their lives in 15 incidents related to dispute of the ownership of land in the NMDs.

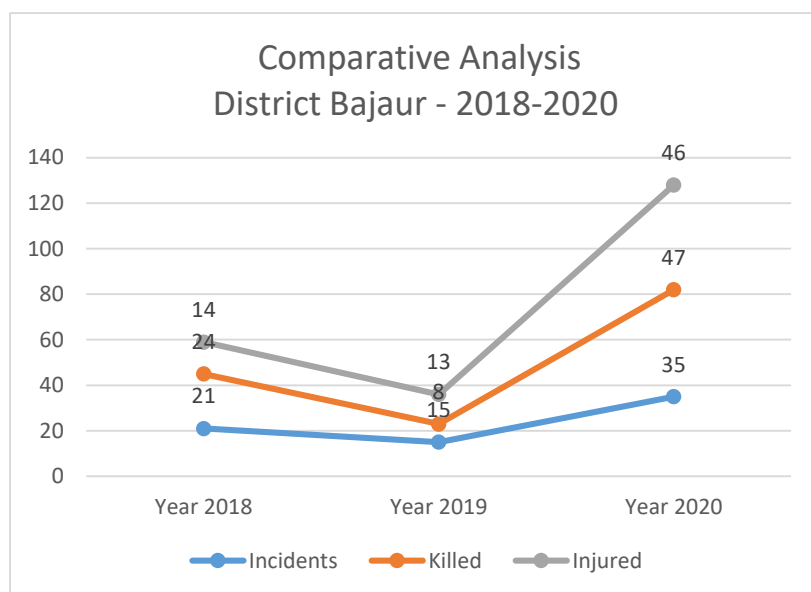
Chapter 2

District wise Comparative Analysis

2.1. District Bajaur

2.1.1. Year 2018-2020

During the year 2020, Bajaur tribal district witnessed an upward trend in terrorist incidents and

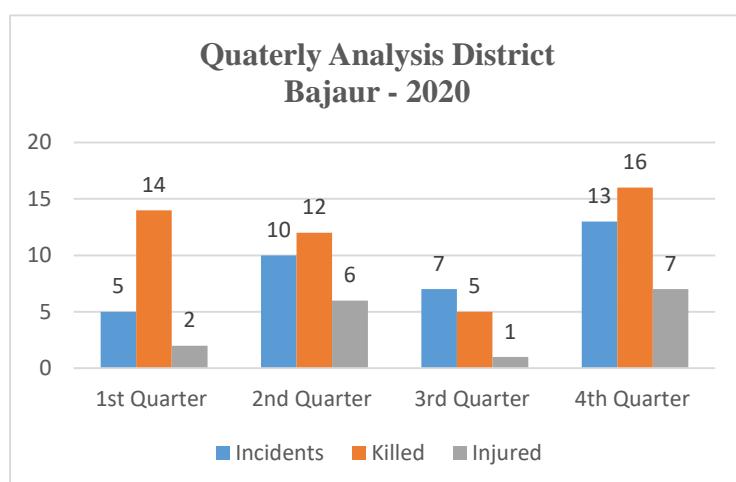


resultant casualties. A total of 35 violent incidents were reported in 2020, compared to 15 such incidents in 2019 and 21 in the year 2018. This marks an incremental increase of 133 percent in 2020, compared to the previous year. A similar trend was also observed vis-à-vis the casualty index.

Compared to 21 casualties (08 killed and 13 injured) in 2019, 93 casualties (47 killed and 46 injured) were reported during the year 2020, accounting for a remarkable increase of 342 percent in overall casualties.

2.1.2. Quarterly Analysis - 2020

The graph given below provides a detail of violent incidents and resultant casualties against



each quarter of 2020 in Bajaur District. According to the graph during the first quarter (January-March) 2020, the security situation in Bajaur district remained relatively peaceful as only five militancy incidents were recorded during the said period.

Conversely, during the second quarter (April-June) of 2020, an increase in militancy incidents and resultant casualties was

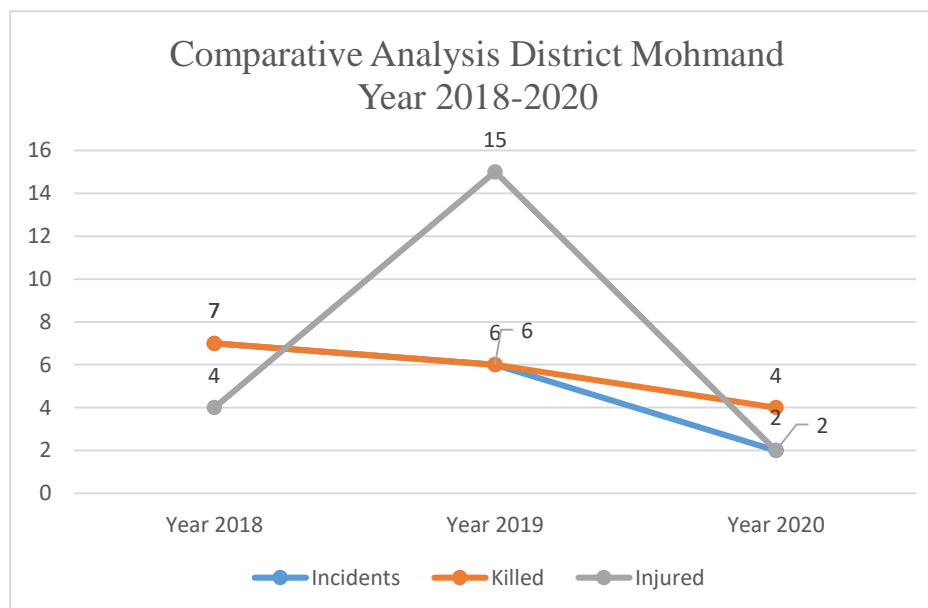
observed in district Bajaur. Compared to five militancy related incidents in the first quarter, 10 such incidents were recorded in the tribal district during the second quarter. A similar trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to 16 casualties, 18 casualties (12 killed and six injured) was reported during the second quarter of 2020.

Terrorism incidents and resultant casualties continued to escalate in the fourth quarter (October-December) 2020 in district Bajaur after witnessing a slight decline in the third quarter (July-September) 2020. Compared to seven militancy related incident in the preceding quarter 13 such incidents were recorded in the fourth quarter, marking an increase of 117 percent in terrorism incidents. A similar trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to six casualties (Five killed and One injured) in the third quarter, 23 casualties (16 killed and Seven injured) were reported from the district during the fourth quarter, accounting for increase of 283 percent.

2.2. District Mohmand

2.2.1. Year 2018-2020

A significant decline in militancy incidents and the resultant casualties was reported in 2020, compared to the previous year. A total of two terrorism incidents were reported in 2020,

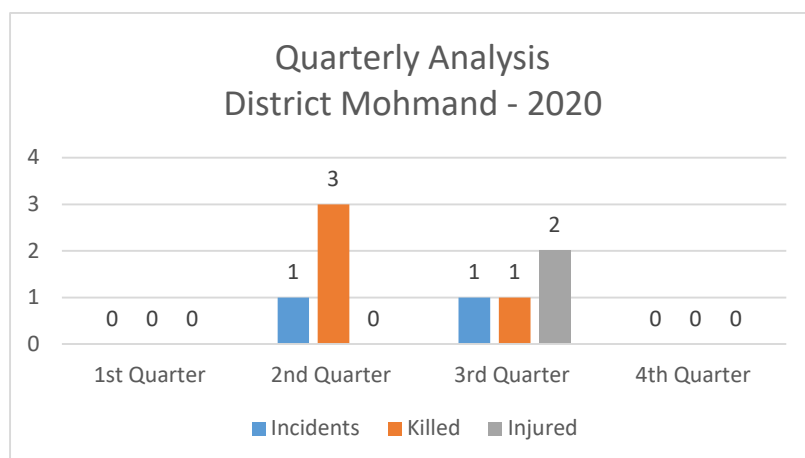


compared to six such incidents in 2019, thereby signifying a decrease of 66 percent. A similar trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to 21 casualties (Six Killed and 15

Injured) in 2019, six casualties (Four killed and Two injured) were reported in the Mohmand tribal district during the year 2020, marking a decrease of 78 percent in overall casualties during the outgoing year as compared to 2019.

2.2.2. Quarterly Analysis – 2020

The graph given below provides detail of terrorism incidents and resultant casualties against each quarter of 2020 in district Mohmand. In total, one incidents of terrorism was recorded in



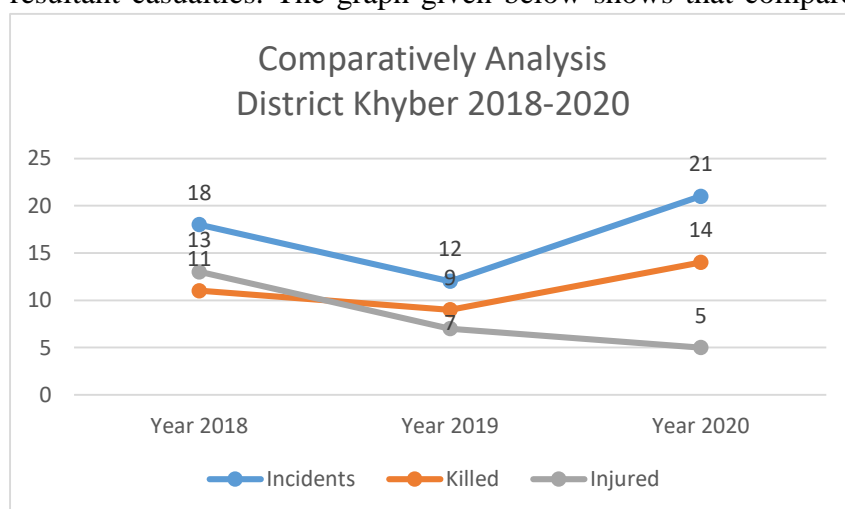
the district during the second quarter (April-July) of 2020 as compared to zero such incidents in the preceding quarter of the same year. The same trend was observed in causality index. Compared to zero casualties during the first quarter (January-March)

2020, only three casualties (Three killed and Zero injured) were reported during the second quarter of the reporting year. The same trend in terrorism incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the third quarter of 2020. Compared to one terrorism incidents during the second quarter (April-July) 2020, the third quarter (July-September) also reported one incidents which resulted in three casualties (One Killed and Two injured). No terrorism incident was reported during the last quarter (October-December) of the reporting year.

2.3. District Khyber

2.3.1. Year 2018- 2020

During 2020, the Khyber tribal district witnessed an upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties. The graph given below shows that compared to 12 violent incidents in

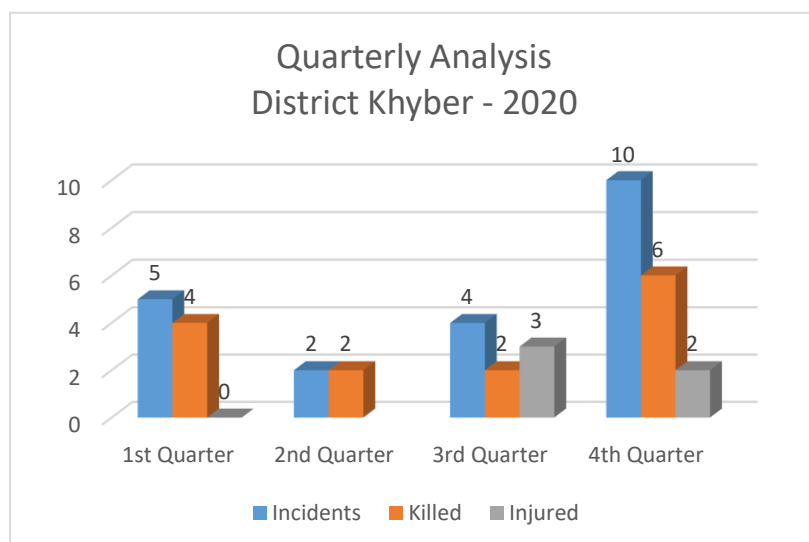


2019, 21 such incidents were reported in Khyber district in the year 2020, which marks for a significant increase of 75 percent. A similar trend was also observed in the number of casualty index. Compared to 16

casualties (Nine Killed and Seven Injured) in 2019, 19 casualties (14 Killed and Five Injured) were reported during the year 2020, accounting for an increase of 16 percent in overall casualties.

2.3.2. Quarterly Analysis – 2020

The graph given below provides a detail of terrorism incidents and resultant casualties against each quarter of 2020 in the Khyber tribal district. Although militancy incidents and resultant



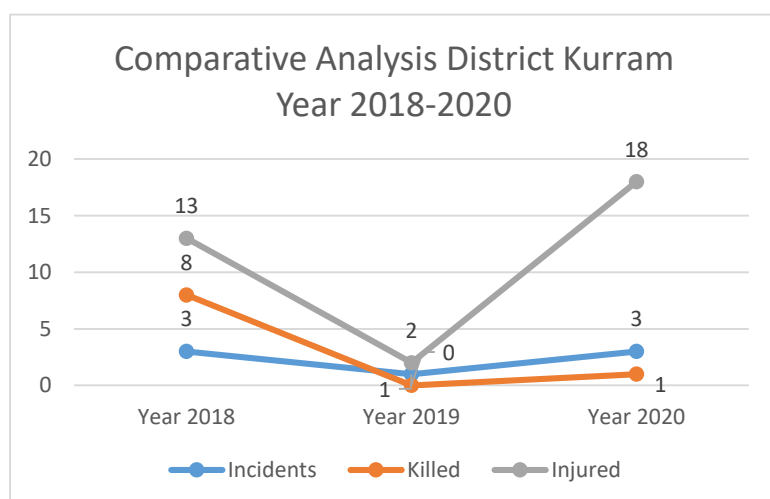
casualties were reported during each quarter of 2020 in Khyber district, the fourth quarter (October-December) 2020 remained the most disturbed quarter during the reporting year. In total, 10 incidents of militancy were recorded during the fourth quarter of 2020 as compared

to five, two and four incidents in the first, second and third quarter of 2020. A similar trend was observed in the casualty index. Only eight casualties (Six killed and Two injured) were reported during the fourth quarter (October-December) of 2020 compared to four, two and five casualties in the first, second and third quarter of 2020.

2.4. District Kurram

2.4.1. Year 2018 - 2020

The security situation in Kurram district remained tense during the year 2020, partly due to a

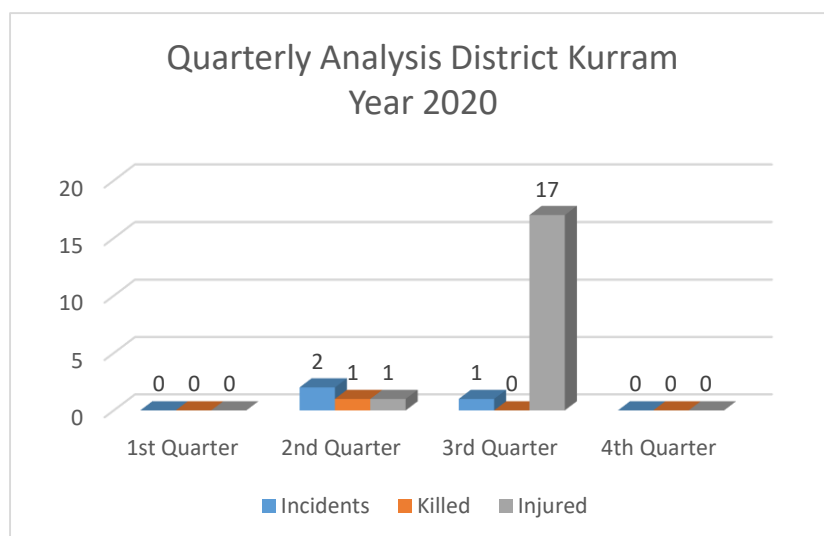


slight increase in militancy related incidents and largely as a result of escalation in land disputes in the district. Compared to one terrorism incidents in 2019, three such incidents were recorded in 2020. Similarly, an upward trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to two casualties

(Zero Killed and Two Injured) in 2019, 19 casualties (One Killed and 18 injured) were reported from Kurram during the reporting year.

2.4.2. Quarterly Analysis - 2020

The graph given below, illustrates that Kurram district largely remained peaceful during first,



and fourth quarter of the year 2020. However, in the second and third quarters of the reporting year, security situation in Kurram remained tense.

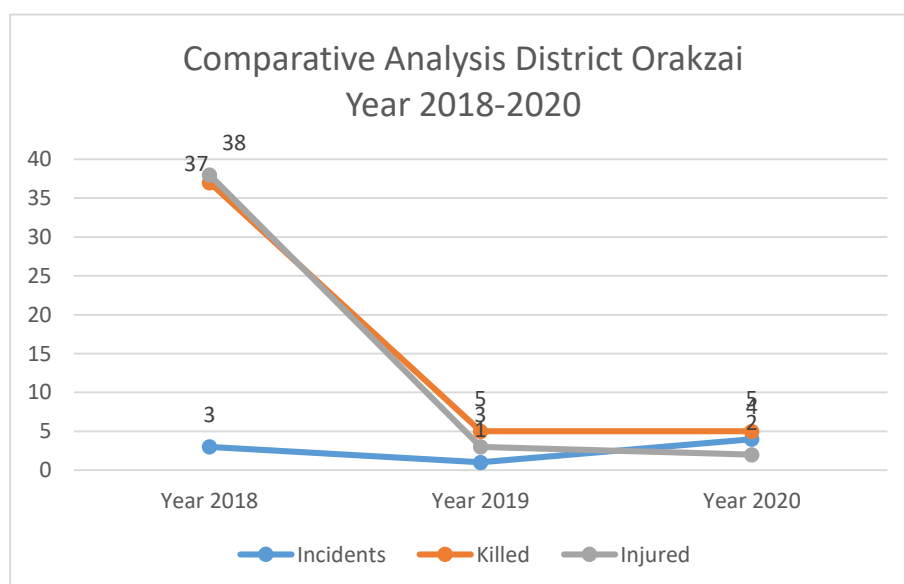
Besides sporadic militancy related incidents, the growing number of land disputes in different parts

of the district pose a major threat to the already fragile state of security situation in the district.

2.5. District Orakzai

2.5.1. Year 2018-2020

The Orakzai tribal district also remained largely peaceful during the year 2020. A slight downward trend in violent incidents was observed during the year 2020 as compared to the



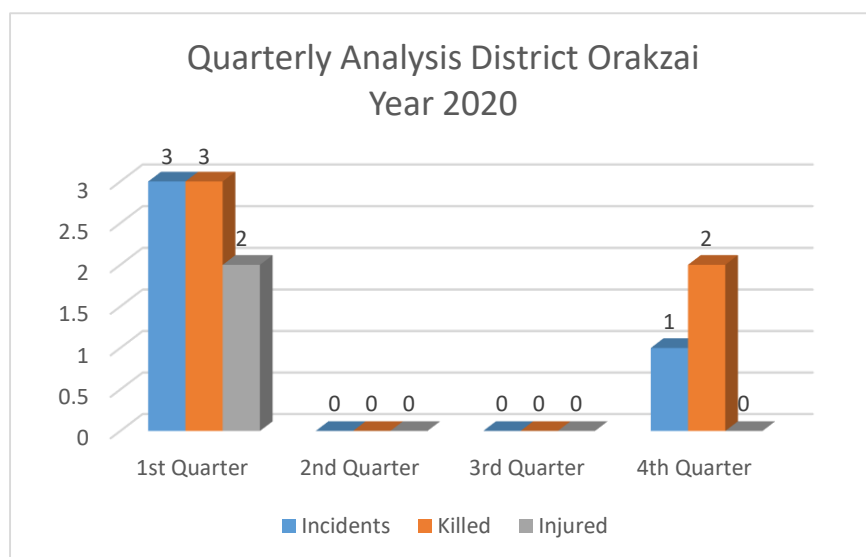
preceding two years (2018&2019).

Compared to three violent incidents in 2018, four such incidents were reported in Orakzai district in the year 2020. Conversely, a downward trend was also observed in

casualty index. Compared to 75 casualties (37 killed and 38 injured) in 2018, seven casualties (Five killed and Two injured) were reported from Orakzai during the year 2020, marking a significant decrease of 90 percent in overall casualties.

2.5.2. Quarterly Analysis 2020

With exception to three terrorist attacks during the first quarter (January-March) 2020, district Orakzai remained peaceful as compared to other tribal districts of KP. The graph given to the



left provides an overview of the nature of incidents and resultant casualties that took place in district Orakzai during the year 2020.

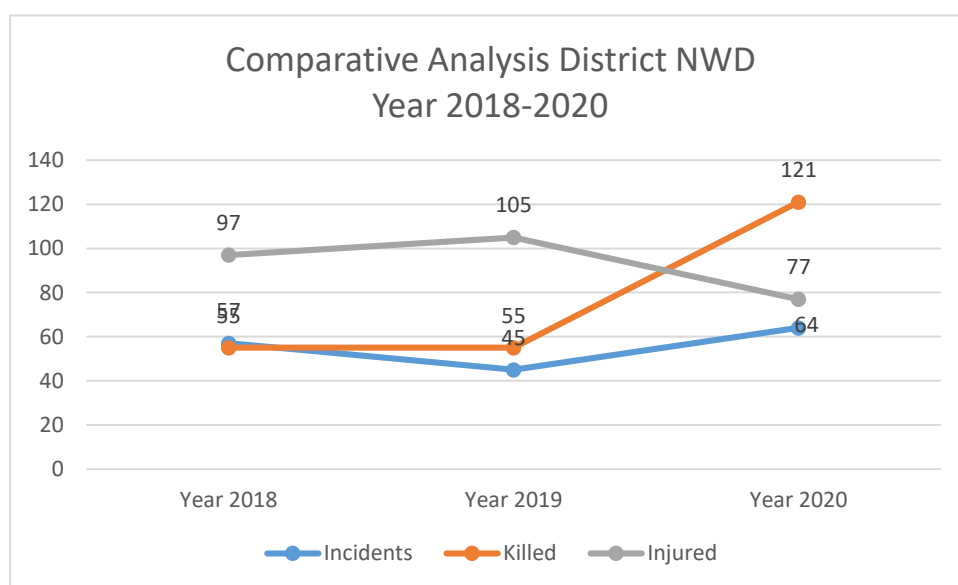
In the first three months of 2020 three terrorist attacks resulted in five

casualties (Three Killed and Two Injured). Although no militancy related incident was reported from the district during the second and third of 2020; nevertheless the security situation in the area remained tense due to the growing number of land disputes in the area.

2.6. District North Waziristan

2.6.1. Year 2018- 2020

The security situation in the North Waziristan tribal district remained turbulent during the year 2020. The graph below provides a comparative analysis of violent incidents and resultant



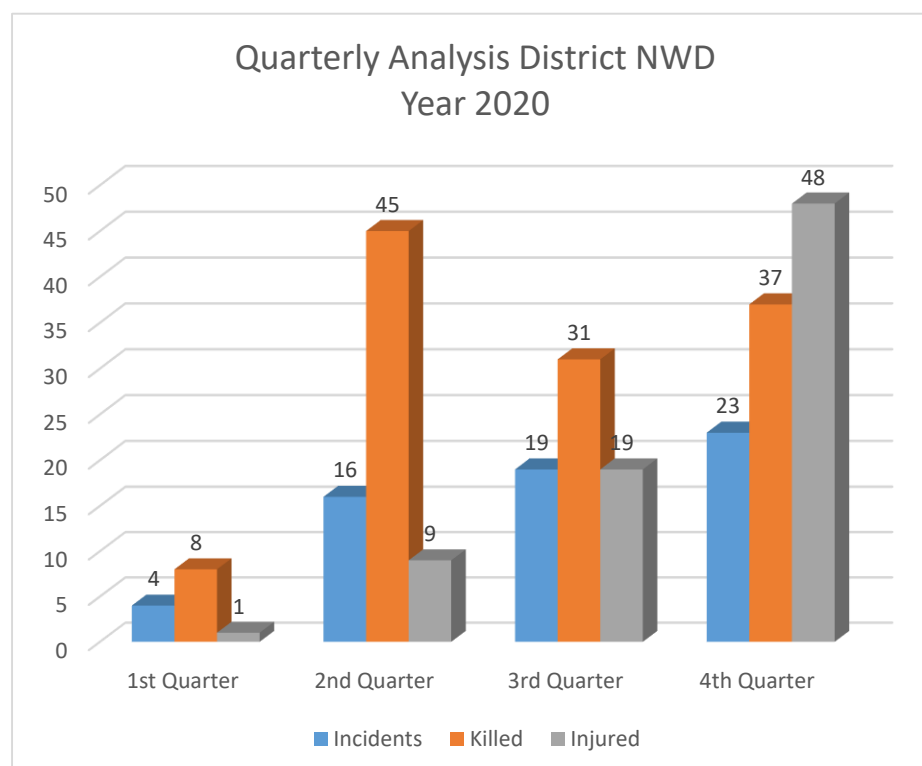
casualties in the district during the year 2018, 2019 and 2020. According to the graph, compared to 57 violent incidents in 2018 and 45 such incidents in 2019, 64

incidents were recorded during the reporting year marking a significant increase of 38 percent

in violent incidents. Likewise, an upward trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to 160 casualties (55 killed and 105 injured) in 2019, 198 casualties (121 killed and 77 injured) occurred in North Waziristan, accounting for an increase of 21 percent in overall casualties.

2.6.2. Quarterly Analysis - 2020

A slight upward trend can be observed in violent incidents and resultant casualties from first quarter to fourth quarter of 2020. Compared to four militancy incidents during the first quarter



(January-March) of 2020, 16 such incidents were reported in the second quarter while 19 and 23 incidents were reported during the third and fourth quarter respectively. A similar trend was observed in casualty index.

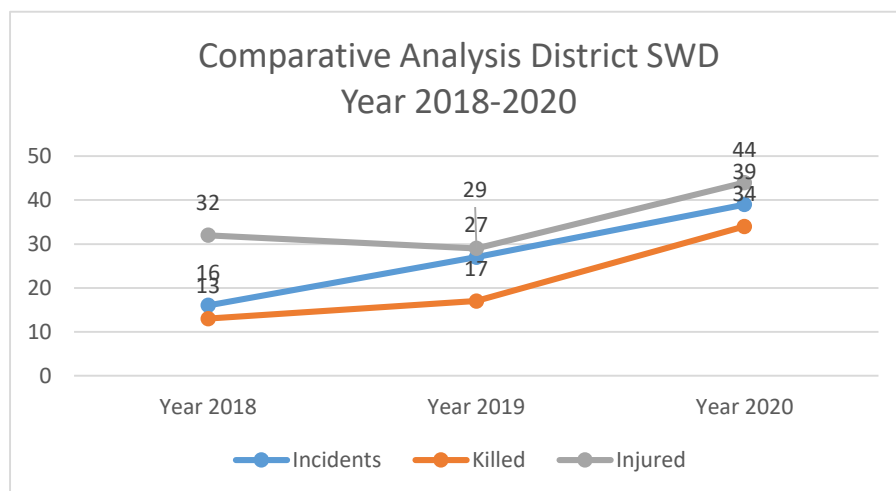
Compared to nine casualties (Eight killed and One injured) in first quarter (January-March) 2020, 54 casualties (45 Killed and nine Injured) were reported during the second quarter of the reporting year.

Conversely, a slight downward trend in casualty index was observed in district North Waziristan during the third and fourth quarter. Compared to 54 casualties during the second quarter of the year 2020, 50 and 85 casualties were reported during the third and fourth quarter of the outgoing year.

2.7. District South Waziristan

2.7.1. Year 2018- 2020

The security situation continued to remain disturbed in District South Waziristan, as the frequency of terrorist incidents increased significantly during the year 2020. Compared to 16 terrorist incidents in 2018 and 27 such incidents in the year 2019, 39 militancy related incidents

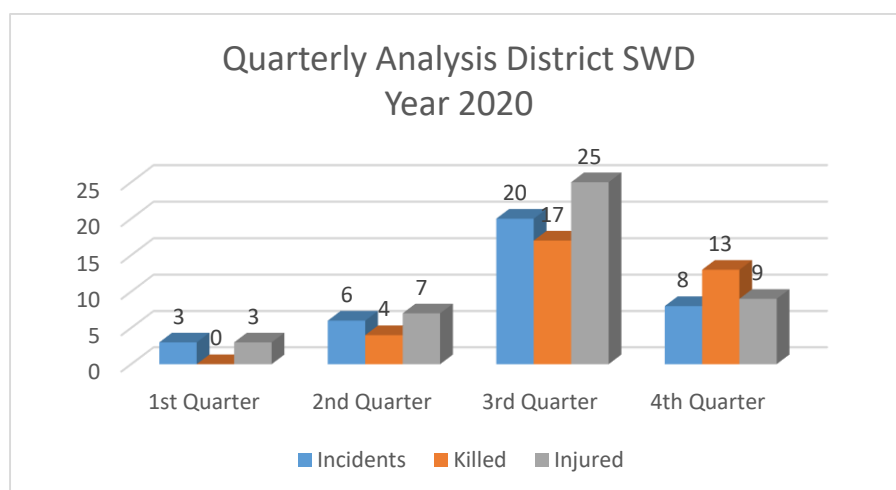


were reported in South Waziristan during the year 2020. This marks a remarkable increase of 44 percent in terrorism incidents as compared to the preceding year. A

similar trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to 46 casualties (17 Killed and 29 Injured) in 2019, 78 casualties (34 Killed and 44 Injured) were reported during the year 2020, thereby marking a significant increase of 67 percent in overall casualties.

2.7.2. Quarterly Analysis - 2020

The security situation in South Waziristan remained disturbed as a steady hike in terrorism incidents and resultant casualties from January – December 2020. Compared to three militancy



related incidents in the first three months of 2020, six such incidents were recorded during the second quarter of the year 2020. Similarly, the casualty index also witnessed an

upward trend during the second quarter of 2020. The frequency of militancy incidents and resultant casualties decreased slightly in the fourth quarter of the reporting year after witnessing a significant upward trend during the third quarter of 2020.

Chapter 3

Trends and Analysis KPNMDs-2020

3.1. Nature of Violent Incidents & Casualties - 2020

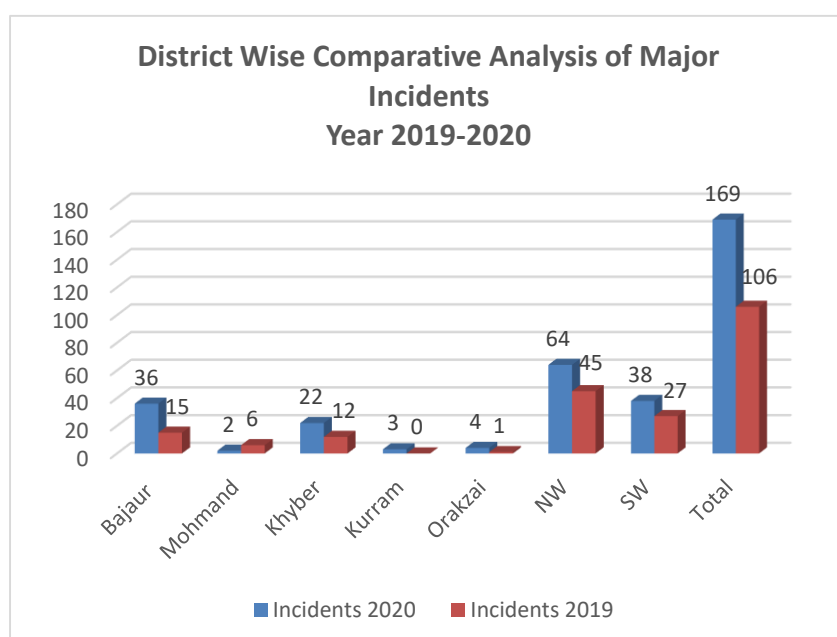
The security situation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Newly Merged Districts remained tense during the year 2020. After witnessing a nose dive in militancy incidents during the past few years, a remarkable surge in militancy and resultant casualties was observed in four out of the seven newly merged districts of KPTDs. Although sporadic attacks continue to occur in other districts of the NMDs, Bajaur, Khyber, North and South Waziristan remained the most turbulent districts during the outgoing year.

A total of 169 violent incidents (137 terrorism and 32 counter-terrorism) incidents were recorded during the year 2020 compared to 160 (106 terrorism and 54 counter-terrorism) incidents in the preceding year. This shows an increase of 29 percent in terrorism related incidents in the year 2020 as compared to the previous year.

The violent incidents of both terrorist and counter-terrorist, resulted in a total of 390 casualties – 226 killed and 164 injured – in all the KP Tribal districts, marking a significant increase of 39 percent in overall casualties.

3.1.1. District Wise Comparative Analysis of Nature Violent Incidents – Year 2019 & 2020

The district wise comparative analysis of violent incidents in the year 2019 and 2020 shows



that North Waziristan district remained the most turbulent district during the reporting year. The graph given in the next page shows that 64 terrorism incidents were recorded in the district during the reporting year compared to 45 such incidents in the previous year. The main reason for

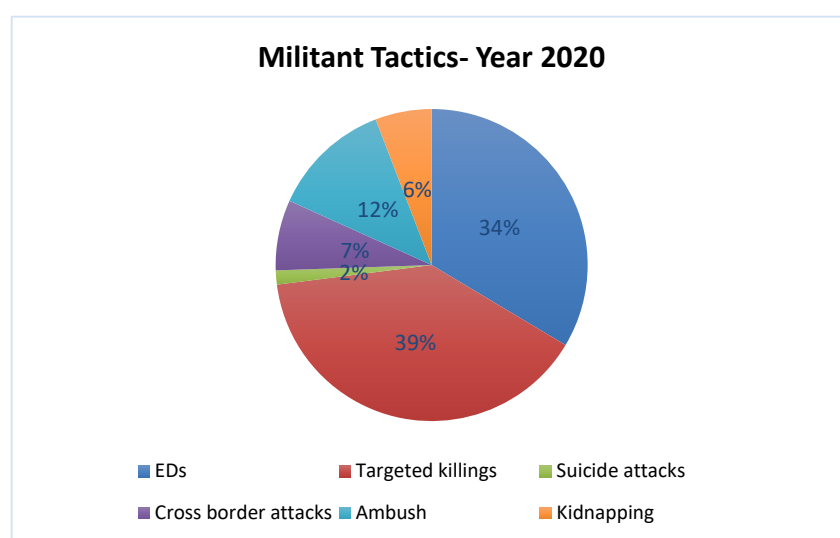
the high number of terrorism incidents in NWD during the year 2020 were the growing incidents of target killing of civilians, IED attacks, and ambush attacks carried out by militant belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

South Waziristan tribal district stood second with 38 incidents compared to 27 such incidents in the previous year followed by Bajaur and Khyber, which reported 36 and 22 militancy incidents respectively. Two terrorism related incidents were reported from Mohmand district while in Orakzai four such incidents took place during the outgoing year.

The surge in militancy related incidents the NMDs during year 2020 illustrates that the militant belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban are returning back to the former tribal areas and are trying to regroup in areas close to the Pak-Afghan border, particularly in North and South Waziristan. The reunification of various groups under the banner of Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) in August 2020 in particular has significantly increased their [TTP] presence and operational capacity in KPTDs.

3.2. Militants Tactics in KPTDs - 2020

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) used suicide attacks, target killing, cross border attacks, kidnapping, Ambushes and IED attacks to target civilians and security forces during the year



2020. Target killing remained the most preferred tool of militants for carrying out attacks against civilians in the NMDs (Newly Merged Districts of KP) during the year 2020. Total 53 target killing incidents were reported from the seven

tribal districts. One of the high profile target killing was that of Arif Wazir in South Waziristan District. On 1st May 2020, Arif Wazir, one of the senior leader of Pasthun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) was killed when an unidentified gunmen shot at him in Wana, headquarters of South

Waziristan tribal district.⁴

Three women were also killed in three separate incidents of target killing in the district during the year 2020. According to FRC field researcher, militants belonging to TTP had already threatened women, particularly NGO workers to stop working in NGOs and avoid going out of their homes without a close male relative. *“Prior to these incidents militants had distributed pamphlets in the district warning the local residents to stop playing loud music and stop women from going out without being accompanied by a close male relative.”*⁵

The terrorists also used IEDs attacks to target civilians and security forces. In total 45 target IED attacks were recorded in which terrorist belonging to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) targeted security forces and civilians in North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai and Bajaur tribal districts.

Table No. 01

IED Attacks and Resultant Casualties in NMDs -2020									
Districts	IED Attacks	Men/Women		Children		Pak Army		Total	
		Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured
Bajaur	7	4	2	0	0	1	2	7	4
Mohmand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Khyber	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Orkazai	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Kurram	3	1	17	0	1	0	0	1	18
NW	16	0	5	0	0	10	21	10	26
SW	17	0	8	0	7	8	7	8	22
Total	46	5	32	0	11	19	30	26	73

Table No.1 above shows the district wise break down of IED attacks and resultant casualties in the newly merged districts during the year 2020. According to the table majority of the IED attacks occurred in North and South Waziristan districts. Security forces and civilians remain the prime target of these attacks. Out of the 45 IED incidents, on 23 occasion, member of security forces were targeted which resulted 49 casualties (19 killed and 30 injured). Similarly, 5 civilians were killed while 43 others were injured in 22 IED attacks against civilians during

⁴ Siraj Uddin, “PTM's Arif Wazir dies in Islamabad hospital after gun attack in Wana”, Dawn, 02 May 2020, [PTM's Arif Wazir dies in Islamabad hospital after gun attack in Wana - Pakistan - DAWN.COM](https://www.dawn.com/news/1478444)

⁵ Interview with field researcher from Waziristan, December 2020

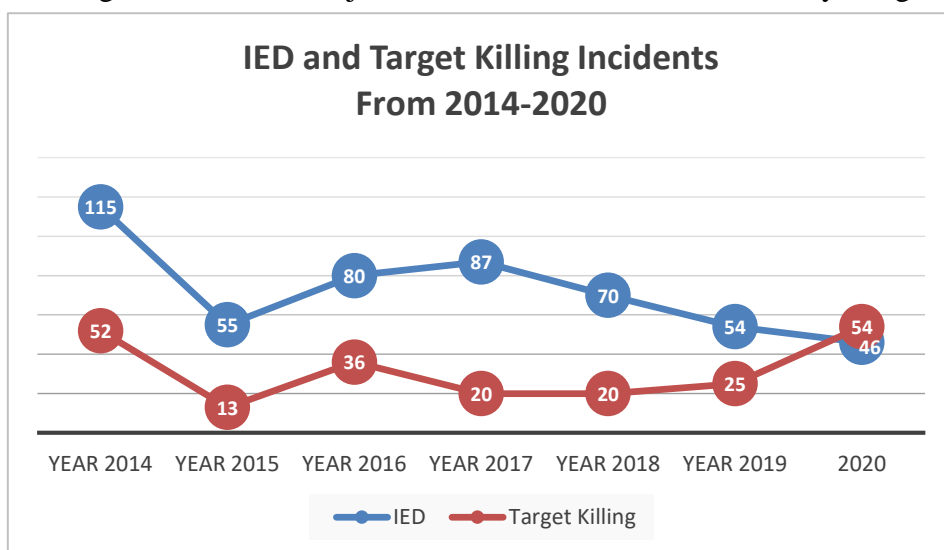
the year 2020.

Ambushes on security forces accounted for 12 percent of the terrorist attacks. 16 incidents of ambushes on security forces, particularly in Bajaur, Khyber, Orakzai, North and South Waziristan were recorded in the year 2020. Terrorist also staged cross border attacks from Afghanistan to target security forces in Khyber and Bajaur districts. TTP militants based inside Afghanistan carried out 10 such attacks against security check posts near the Afghanistan border in Khyber and Bajaur districts in the year 2020.

TTP militants also carried out two suicide attacks and eight kidnapping for ransom during the year 2020. On 11th August 2020, a TTP suicide bomber blew himself up near a military vehicle carrying a brigadier and two junior officers in Ladha tehsil of South Waziristan, wounding all three.⁶ Shortly after the attack, Mohammad Khurasani, a spokesman Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack.

3.2.1. Comparative Analysis of IED & Target Killing Incidents – Year 2014-2020

Although IEDs remain major threat to civilian lives in the newly merged district; nevertheless



the frequency of IED attacks have been on the decline over the past few years. The graphs below gives a bird eye view of the number of target killings and IED

attacks from the year 2014-2020.

3.3. The Return of Tehrik-e-Taliban of Pakistan (TTP): A Major threat to Stability in KPTDs

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) led by Mufti Noor Wali Mahsud remained the major

⁶ AP News, "Taliban bomber hits Pakistani army vehicle in NW, wounding 3", AP News, 11th August 2020, [Taliban bomber hits Pakistani army vehicle in NW, wounding 3 \(apnews.com\)](https://apnews.com/article/taliban-bomber-hits-pakistani-army-vehicle-in-nw-wounding-3)

actor of instability in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTDs). Although majority of the TTP militants are based in Birmal area of Afghanistan but there are reports that some of the groups affiliated with TTP have returned to some of the areas in the North and South Waziristan districts and are trying to re-establish their networks there.

Moreover, the reunification of various faction of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in July 2020 has further helped the group in enhancing its presence in the area. According to FRC field researcher for the twin tribal districts of Waziristan, earlier militants were carrying out sporadic attacks against civilians and security forces but after the re-unification of various faction of TTP, their operational capacity has increased significantly in the NMDs, particularly in the North and South Waziristan.⁷ Sadiq Noor Group, Hafiz Gul Bahader Group, Aleem Khan Group, Jamatul Ahrar, Hizbul Ahrar, Hakeem Ullah group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Musa Shaheed Karawan group etc. have shun their differences and pledged allegiance to Mufti Noor Wali the current head of TTP.⁸

*“Since taking charge of TTP, Mufti Noor Wali Khan Mahsud played vital role in reunify the militant outfits. Mr. Wali has been trying to reunify all the smaller militants’ factions under the umbrella of TTP. He is also reported to have been holding talks with Mangal Bagh, the head of Lashkar-e-Islam to convince him to join TTP. But so far he has not been able to convince Mangal Bagh to join TTP.”*⁹

Earlier, growing factionalism due to rifts over leadership among the various outfits of TTP had weakened the group particularly after the launch of military operations in June 2014. However, the reunification has strengthened TTP. FRC field researcher for North and South Waziristan districts revealed that, the reunification would increase the power and reach of TTP significantly because the above mentioned groups have networks across the country.¹⁰

As a result of the reunification an incremental surge in militancy related incidents was observed in the newly merged districts during the second half of the year 2020. Compared to 57 violent incidents during the first half (January-June) of the reporting year, 113 such incidents were reported during the second half (July-December) of the year 2020 which shows an increase of

⁷ Interview with FRC Field Researcher Waziristan, December 2020

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

96 percent in militancy related incidents.

Furthermore, after a break of four years the first incident of beheading was reported in North Waziristan districts. The beheading incident also indicates towards the re-emergence of Tehrik-e-Taliban in the newly merged districts Khyber Pakhtunkwa province of Pakistan.

The current wave of terrorist attacks signify that TTP militants are again not only trying to contest the government control over the newly merged districts, but are trying to expand their activities and destabilize hitherto peaceful adjacent districts of KP province. According to FATA Research Centre data base, 42 violent incidents were reported from the different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which resulted in 206 casualties (60 Killed and 106 Injured).

3.4. Terror Financing

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant continue to raise finances through extortion and kidnapping ransom during the year 2020. With the growing presence of TTP inside the newly merged districts, TTP militants have stepped up extortion and kidnapping for ransom activities.

The situation is particularly worse in North and South Waziristan districts. According to FRC field researcher for Waziristan, militant belonging to TTP are demanding 13-20 percent commission in development projects. *“They [TTP militants] ask the contractors to pay 13-20 percent of the total project budget. Unless and until the commission is paid, the project cannot be implemented in the area.”¹¹*

Most of the extortion cases go unreported since the victims does not register them with the local police and prefer to resolve such threats by negotiating the amount with the TTP militants.

Besides extortion, militants also used kidnapping for ransom to finance their activities during the year 2020. According to FRC data base eight incidents of kidnapping for ransom were reported during the reporting year. In October 2020, unidentified men kidnapped two employees of a non-governmental organisation, including an engineer, in Makeen area of South Waziristan tribal district.

¹¹ Interview with field research from Waziristan, December 2020

3.5. Growing incidents of Land Disputes: Potential Threat to large Scale Conflict in the NDMs

During the year 2020, land disputes remained one of the dominant form of conflict in the newly merged districts (NMDs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to FATA Research Centre (FRC) data base, 158 tribesmen have lost their lives in 15 incidents of land disputes across the seven districts of NMDs during the reporting year.

After two years of merger, lands in the newly merged districts are still owned collectively and lack documentation. Although, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's administration had extended land laws to the NMDs in March 2019 which not only empowered the local officials but has allowed residents to take their land disputes to formal court. But unfortunately due to lack of funds and willingness on part of the government, land registration in the area is going on at snail pace. As a result dispute over the ownership of land are on the rise, particularly in those areas where the internally displaced person (IDPs) have recently been repatriated.

On 3rd June 2020, five people were killed and two others were injured in fierce armed clash between two rival groups over land dispute in Azam Warsak area of South Waziristan district. Similarly, on 7 May 2020, five people lost their lives in Tappi area of North Waziristan district while 21 others were injured in a separate incidents of land disputes after one week in the same area. Few months later, violent clashes were also reported between Mahsud and Wazir tribes over the ownership of land near the border of Makin and Razmak.

Earlier in May 2020, violent clashes erupted between Parachamkani tribe and Balishkhel tribes in Kurram tribal district. The armed clashes between the two rival tribes continued for several days which resulted in 54 casualties (14 killings and 40 injuries). Extremist elements in the districts are using the land disputes to promote sectarianism in the district. There were reports that extremist groups distributed pamphlet among Sunni community in Kurram to boycott social and business relations with the Shia community in the district.

In this backdrop, the government should take serious measures to resolve the issue of land disputes in the newly merged district. If not addressed, it can have far-reaching consequences for the already fragile security situation in the NMDs.

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